

swing of political forces, was against them
The trade
depression of 1907-10 was ending in 1911, the
curve of
business and of employment was beginning to
rise Prices
too were going up, and the minds of the
Unions were set
to wages questions, rather than to the problems
of destitution
More important still, Mr Lloyd George was
launching his
Social Reform programme, on lines far removed
from theirs,
and detaching the support of the volatile Mr
Churchill
for them The establishment of a network of
Labour
Exchanges, and in 1911, of Contributory
Insurance against
Unemployment, on a limited scale, seemed
to take the
sting out of their proposals, under this head
Later in the
same year, came his National Health Insurance
legislation,
again, on a contributory basis This, after
acute divisions,
the Labour Party, in the House of Commons,
decided to
support As the Webbs put it succinctly, much
later,

"Although these schemes of social insurance left
untouched both
the evils and the cost of the Poor Law, and thus
gave the go-by to
the proposals of the Commission, they presently
absorbed the
whole attention not only of the Cabinet and the
legislature, but
of the public All the steam went out of the
movement for
extinguishing the Boards of Guardians J>1

It is not without significance, that in this
comment they
speak as though what they had been aiming at
was simply
the "abolition of the Boards of Guardians "
As a matter
of fact, had that been their simple, single
proposition, they
might have got it through. It never was, and,
as an item,

it fell more and more into the background
The very
widening of the issue; the expansion of the
campaign into
a war against Destitution, all along the line,
and for the
establishment of a "Framework of
Pievention," militated
^ against the achievement of the more limited
objective
Anyhow, the battle was lost the field of
fighting had
' been transferred Indeed, even *The*
Crusade, throughout

¹ *English Poor Law History*, p 723